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Yeates, Helen L. and Carson, Susan J. (2009) *Bend and stretch : pedagogical callisthenics in creative practice honours*. Text : Journal of Writing and Writing Courses, 6(October Special Issue Number 6). pp. 1-13.

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## **Queensland University of Technology**

**Helen Yeates and Susan Carson**

### **Bend and stretch: pedagogical callisthenics in creative practice honours**

#### Abstract:

The supervision of research higher degree (RHD) candidates in creative practice-led programs poses challenges for both candidates and supervisors. Changes in international postgraduate training agendas have complicated this ever-shifting terrain. This paper investigates the honours research training year. This fourth year is made up of a project and coursework and is a traditional entry point for doctoral study. At Creative Industries, honours acts as a precursor and model for supervisory practice in postgraduate creative arts in an interdisciplinary faculty. The findings indicate that best practice may involve 'bending and stretching' existing pedagogical approaches for an increasingly interdisciplinary and mobile research environment.

This discussion considers the supervision of candidates enrolled in Queensland University of Technology Faculty of Creative Industries honours courses that encompass a range of disciplines including creative writing, fashion, animation and performance studies. We present results of an analysis of the work of honours students who are creative practitioners (many of whom will, or have, moved into the RHD environment). This examination was undertaken in order to develop an understanding of the dynamics of creative practice at this level, particularly in light of the growing emphasis on early research training in Australian universities. Specific pedagogical strategies mooted include establishing a common research vocabulary, an increasing focus on research design, and a linking of theory and practice.

#### Biographical note:

Helen Yeates teaches and researches in the film, TV and new media discipline as well as in postgraduate research methodologies. She supervises honours and postgraduate students across a range of disciplines in the Creative Industries Faculty at Queensland University of Technology. In 2002 she produced an award-winning short film and is currently working on another production. Her publications range across film, television and feminist studies. Helen has been a senior member of the Brisbane International Film Festival Program Advisory Panel since 1994; she also founded the long-running Queensland New Filmmakers Awards. Recently her research interests and publications have focused on practice-led research methods and creative pedagogies.

Dr Susan Carson is Head, Postgraduate Studies (Research), Creative Industries Faculty, QUT. She coordinates and teaches into the CIF honours program. Her research interests, apart from creative practice pedagogies, include Australian modernism and literary tourism.

Keywords:

honours year—creative industries—creative practice—pedagogy

## Changing shape: the research higher degree environment

As research higher degree (RHD) programs diversify to meet university goals, there is a concurrent pressure on modes of entry into the Australian RHD environment, as indicated by contemporary debates among key federal government agencies. This pathway debate implies that entry courses will need to be flexible and creative, in effect, to 'bend and stretch' to match student and university expectations. These shifts offer a particular challenge, as well as an opportunity, both for those charged with developing honours programs and for those who supervise honours students in an environment that focuses on multidisciplinary creative practice. In this context, honours is a fourth year of study comprising a one-year, full-time, research oriented program that is an add-on to a three-year bachelor degree or a four- or five-year double degree.

One way to meet these challenges is to take the lead from the creative work itself: in effect, to build a pedagogical supervisory model that relates to the processes and practices of creative practice as research. This is, of course, easier said than done. Embedding a high level of scholarship, practice and research within a one-year (twenty-six-week) program involves the development of a relationship between discipline staff, creative practice research supervisors and the lecturer-tutors involved in coursework, as well as with the students themselves. But a working 'bricolage' practice of connectivity, in effect an approach that emulates the operations of creative practice, can be shown to be an effective response to supervision challenges. In this framework, coordinators can support a diversity of methodologies and practices that underpin the creative practice while being mindful of university timelines and regulations; for example, the doctoral scholarship application deadlines at the end of the honours year.

National moves to 'modernise' honours are in keeping with changes in the international higher education arena. Our argument is developed around three key considerations: an account of recent changes in the research higher degree environment; national and international research and supervision models; and changing pedagogical practice. The aim here is not to present a complete or rigid model but to suggest ideas that might be helpful for honours coordinators and supervisors who are involved in research programs and pathway design, thereby stimulating further debate in the field.

This discussion of creative practice pedagogies has grown out of feedback from students in the 2008 Creative Industries Faculty honours cohort at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), former honours candidates and teaching staff. In Creative Industries, the fourth year honours program typically comprises three coursework units and a thesis, or a project that is made up of a majority of creative practice and an accompanying exegesis. This means that faculty staff other than supervisors have an input into the project. The 2008 students surveyed for this study were each awarded a first class honours degree. The data was obtained by semi-formal interviews with staff and personal interviews with the students, as well as a survey of internal and external examiners' reports. The internal staff were all honours

supervisors or taught into the program. The increasing emphasis on multidisciplinary in our faculty has encouraged ongoing reflection on teaching practice by teaching staff and, indeed, a careful reconsideration of the role of the program itself. This process appears to be in step with a national soul-searching on the value of honours degrees as documented in the report from the 2008 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation (SCISI). In this study, we will show how the honours program at QUT has addressed critical pedagogical practice in higher education through what we term a ‘creative bricolage’ approach, in order to actualise ‘a critical interdisciplinary platform of possibility’ for honours students (Kanpol 1999: 137). This, in effect, opens a space for practices that can stretch both students and academic staff, often in unpredictable ways. Specific pedagogical approaches include strategies that establish a common research vocabulary early in the program; a focus on research design that nurtures self-reflexivity in relation to the creative practice; and a pragmatic linking of theory and practice.

In 2008, honours programs, described by Margaret Kiley, Robert Cantwell, Catherine Manathunga and David Boud as the ‘Cinderella’ of Australian higher education programs (Kiley et al 2008: 182), became the focus of several studies linked to RHD performance in Australian universities. Reports from authorities such as the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee as well as the federal government indicate a sense of ambivalence, and some angst, about the form and content of honours, especially in relation to shifting international higher education frameworks and the increasing emphasis on the global mobility of postgraduates. In the previous year, a global summit on doctoral education had endorsed co-operation, co-development and exchanges of doctoral education at the world level (Chambaz 2008: 9) and further global agreements have called on universities to ‘meet the challenges of interdisciplinary training, the increasing geographical interdisciplinarity and intersectoral mobility’ (Chambaz 2008:12).

If RHD programs are to be ‘reconceptualised’ (Wissler 2008: 39), how best can honours programs be adapted to meet the changing RHD environment? At the 2008 Quality in Postgraduate Research conference, Kiley et al expanded on their ‘Cinderella’ comment, stating that because honours programs fall between undergraduate and postgraduate programs, ‘they do not fit readily in quality assurance processes for coursework or research programs and are mostly ignored by research in higher education’. Furthermore, in their opinion:

[t]hese problems might not be significant if it were not for the fact that the First Class Honours degree is the gold standard of undergraduate education. It is the most commonly cited entry requirement into the PhD and essential for most postgraduate scholarships (Bourke et al 2006). Whilst holding the status of a gold standard it is not fully understood and the extraordinarily diverse range of practices covered by Honours programmes are generally unacknowledged. (2008: 182)

## The pathways debate

However, the federal government report indicates that the ‘gold standard’ pathway is no longer universal – indeed, it is described as anachronistic by one academic, as noted below. As well, the research of Kiley and her colleagues, based on material collated for the ongoing Australian Learning and Teaching Council enquiry into ‘The roles and practices of Australian honours programs’, raises many issues that trouble those responsible for curriculum design, especially in institutions that emphasise creative practice. What, exactly, is the nature of this ‘fourth year’ and in what ways do honours students articulate to postgraduate research degrees? These questions are important and time-sensitive, especially when considering Australian postgraduate education in relation to the European context. The establishment of a European Higher Education Area by 2010, announced in the Bologna Declaration of June 1999, will have an impact on Australian curricula as universities strive for transnational compatibility. The Bologna process, based on a three-year bachelor degree (followed by a two-year masters degree and then a PhD), could eliminate the need for an honours program. In Scotland, which, like Australia, has an end-on honours year, honours is not equivalent to a masters degree (Kiley et al 2008: 184). In the Australian context, an honours qualification can out-rank a Master of Arts.

These problematic issues were canvassed in hearings before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation (SCISI) ‘Inquiry into research training and research workforce issues in Australian universities’. Transcripts of public hearings held in August 2008 include statements as follows: ‘[w]e spend a lot of time determining honours equivalence, making judgments against what internationally has become an anachronistic gold standard. The committee hearings indicated that international students ‘affirm the Bologna framework, in terms of their expectations for entry’ (SCISI: 40), with one respondent stating, in regards to honours, that ‘I am not sure that it is necessarily the most salient pathway in the international arena’ (SCISI: 41). The report appeared inconclusive: honours is still seen to be important but it must be modernized (SCISI: 13). A general call for change was issued, but the question remained as ‘modernized to what?’ One university, Monash, responded last year by implementing a restructured honours program that aimed to fast-track ‘high performers into research from as early as their first undergraduate year’ (Trounson 2008). In the interdisciplinary creative practice environment, however, such early identification may be problematic.

In the interdisciplinary milieu, the ‘to what?’ question becomes even more interesting when canvassed in the multi-layered context of practice-led research. The question ‘from what?’ is also important. In a creative practice environment, students might be interested in a ‘fourth year’ that positions them for national entry in their professional domain rather than an academic career. In our Faculty of Creative Industries at Queensland University of Technology, an honours cohort can range across multiple domains or combinations of these: animation, creative writing and literary studies, dance, fashion, film, screen and television, interactive and visual design, journalism, media and communication, music and sound, and visual arts.

Not all disciplines are represented every year and an increasing number of interdisciplinary students are joining the honours cohort. Although each student undertakes a 'thesis' (which can be a conventional study or a practice-led project), the project is supported by honours coursework in each semester that is interdisciplinary in structure and intent. All students undertake research methods units that give them a familiarity with a range of methodologies available and the principles of reflective practice. In all units, there is a focus on developing a sophistication in reflective practice, and an acknowledgement that examiners have to see research itself as creative. As the year progresses, the students view and respond to each other's work, providing critical feedback on diverse material.

### **Opening the pedagogic space: research on creative practice**

The relationship between conventional academic research and creative practice has been canvassed widely in recent academic literature. In this section we consider certain arguments about this process and extend these ideas into the interdisciplinary environment, focusing on calls for the recognition of the collaborative nature of creative practice which demands, in turn, a flexible pedagogical approach that can 'stretch' to accommodate diverse creative content, and at the same time produce rigorous accounts of reflective practice.

In England, Graham Mort and Lee Horsley (2007) have written about the relationship of conventional academic research process and creative practice in a virtual environment. Their research, based on one discipline only (creative writing) is chiefly concerned with the virtual environment, but they make several interesting points about the relationship of conventional research pedagogies in the context of creative practice. For Mort and Horsley, the benefit of teaching via a virtual environment is that it offers a 'seamlessness' of pedagogic exchange. Supervision functions in a virtual world and the creative writing functions in an imagined space; the result is a new online, fluid pedagogic space in which the teaching practice can become part of the creative practice (2007: 516). Thus in the creative practice classroom, the pedagogic space of transformative learning involves a recognition of the boundaries, in effect the 'seams' of the discipline and the liminal spaces between disciplines.

### **The process of exchange**

In the creative arts, these 'seams' become an important part of the pedagogy of exchange. If the student is involved in face-to-face learning interaction with other researchers who are creative writers/actors/dancers/visual artists/new media designers, then the meeting places, those sites of methodological exchange or border crossing, become critical. In this context, the lecturer-tutor has to swing attention away from content to process, for two key reasons. Obviously the lecturer-tutor will not have expertise across a range of disciplines, but more importantly it is in the unpicking of ideas at the seams of disciplines that students will be able to make the type of knowledge transfer that is transformative and indicative of what may be required in higher degree research in general. At the same time, the 'teacher' must be conscious

of what Mort and Horsley call the ‘oscillating’ role of tutor and student (2007: 516). In a practice-led environment, the students are bringing to the table, first and foremost, their creative work. Mort and Horsley say that, in this situation, the process of interaction between student and teacher has to be ‘improvised, instantaneous, and durable’ (2007: 518).

Such interaction demands that the methodology of creative practice itself elicits a similarly flexible pedagogical approach, both in supervision and in the coursework undertaken. Paul Carter has recently called attention to the collaborative nature of creative practice, arguing that interpersonal, creative interaction should be acknowledged in a research context. It is, he says, ‘not simply a matter of praxis, it also represents the critical difference of creative research from other forms of critical enquiry’ (2007:16). Central to Carter’s ‘critical difference’ is the invention, or ‘interest’, for the practitioner:

But for this desire to go beyond ourselves, we could not encounter what is not yet (for ourselves) – what scientists like to call the new but others call the other. Interest is the desire to collaborate: and collaboration is a microcosm of the new relation or worldly arrangement we desire to create. The ethics of invention reside not in the truth of what is found but in the interest of what is done. (2007: 17)

This interest in ‘what is done’ provides ‘an imaginative breakthrough, which announces locally different forms of sociability, environmental interactivity and collective storytelling’ (18). The production of a ‘new relation’, as above, is a useful response to the honours student who may ask: ‘How can I fulfill the expectation of a contribution to knowledge when my discipline has always taught there is no such thing as new knowledge, in that we build on the work of the past?’

### **Conditions for practice-led research – the supervision exercise plan**

Carter identifies three conditions for practice-led research: ‘It has to describe a forming situation. It has to articulate the discursive and plastic intelligence of materials. And it has to establish the necessity of design. There is, of course, a constant feedback between these three facets of the inquiry’ (21). It is the second of these conditions that is particularly important for the supervisor of creative practice-led work. In order for the process of articulation of the material to occur, Carter says:

it is necessary to suspend the usual forms of classification – traditional definitions of roles, techniques, functions and outcomes need to be set aside, and a kind of ‘what if’, anything-goes mode of speculation encouraged. The same applies to materials, whether they are documents, images, sites, animate bodies, or the situation itself (22).

Carter emphasises an act of ‘finding’ as an important aspect of the discourse of invention and creativity, which moves back and forth (22). This movement seems to be essential to the classroom context between lecturer-tutor and practitioner as much as in the origin of the practice. What is arrived at is an imaginative and collaborative ecology – which presents an increasingly complex terrain, both for creative practice supervisors as they negotiate how best to embed academic research demands within this process, and for examiners who ask how best to respond to the work.



For Carter, as well as for Mort and Horsley, the starting point is the same: the student's work and the process by which it is made material. All three writers also acknowledge the importance of searching for new pedagogies to mesh academic and creative practice ambitions and state that discussion in this context must be speculative rather than definitive. If Carter is right in arguing that artists are looking for a connection with their worlds from numerous sources, thereby filling a gap in creative practice that they sense exists, then an honours creative practice pedagogy should model this process of connectivity, indeed through the framework of bricolage, in which diverse artefacts inform a whole. For, according to Denzin and Lincoln, a researcher may be viewed as a '*bricoleur*, as a maker of quilts, or, as in filmmaking, a person who assembles images into montages' (2000: 4; *itals in original*). Hence, the critical pedagogy in the honours course can indeed be framed as a working 'bricolage' practice of connectivity, which is inherently 'pragmatic, strategic and self-reflexive' (Nelson et al, cited in Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 4). While the authors cited by Denzin and Lincoln are referring to the methodology of cultural studies, the description is apt and transferrable within a pedagogical context in creative practice. These ideas are important because they are the basis of the production of creative content. This versatile approach assists in the negotiation of the 'border traffic' between theory and practice that is expected of students in the limited timeframe of the honours year. These negotiations often disrupt entrenched discipline beliefs or habits, while at the same time expectations of high-level scholarship are increased.

### **The student experience: notes from the inside**

The examination reports analysed for this study, together with the student interviews, reveal the complexity for creative practice students (across all disciplines) of integrating the creative and critical aspects of their work. Where it is achieved, the sense of connectivity and convergence of theory and practice impresses both academic and industry examiners. In the 2008 honours cohort in Creative Industries at QUT, an external examiner of one student (in interactive design) who achieved a first-class result, made the point that the exegesis was as much a creative work as the practice. The student's work was critiqued as being overly crowded and ambitious (not uncommon at honours level, in either practice-led or non-practice-led projects). Both internal and external examiners queried the mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the scope of a practice-led work – noting a kind of overload of methodologies across the spectrum, that points to this creative student 'bending and stretching' in order to conceptualise and actualise his practice. Nonetheless, both examiners commended the work on the strength that the process of reflective practice brought to the research.

Another 2008 student (creative writing) who received first-class honours attracted impressive reports, although one examiner (external) questioned the 'balance' achieved in the methodology, an interweaving of critical and creative work. Such innovative threading, where the meaning tends to linger in the liminal spaces between theory and practice, is a challenging exercise that would daunt many students, and even, in this case, an examiner. However, both examiners' reports did indicate their

overall excitement on reading a project that developed the creative and critical aspects in this way. Once again, the sophistication of self-reflexivity was singled out for comment. It is interesting to note that a similar embracing of connectivity applies in the work of a 2008 student in the fashion discipline (which is relatively new to the RHD arena) who was commended by an external examiner for the project's ability to bring aspects of fashion to the world of art history and offer a new way of reading established genres. She was also awarded a first-class pass.

Feedback from the three honours students mentioned here is illuminating in relation to each one's particular perceptions about the course. Regarding the creative practice thesis, the interactive design student stated that he found it hard at times to 'switch from right brain to left brain', having to work on different practices to facilitate the change in his thinking (for example, doodling and brainstorming) before he could engage fully with his practice or its theoretical underpinning. As a mature-age student, honours study was a stretch for him in many ways, as he re-entered study and made connections, personally and intellectually. The latter he achieved through discovering 'the reflective practitioner mode' as both enlightening and related to, in his words, 'the whole epiphany thing'. He particularly liked the way 'the course encouraged other ways of seeing things, based in lived experience', as well as enjoying the 'informal atmosphere' in the graduate seminar unit in second semester where 'ideas could be explored across disciplines'. Coming from a non-traditional background, in a former life he had been a disc jockey. In an excitingly productive way, he transmuted the interactive DJ 'feedback loop' into a form of engagement with his practice-led research project. Operating from the margins, he took 'a risky research position' in his work on producing HIV/AIDS prevention materials, through the iterative design process, in order to attempt to increase the efficacy of community-based projects.

Also a risk-taker and boundary-breaker, the creative writing honours student is a bricoleur at heart, claiming:

My main concern in honours was to interweave creative and critical practice especially as I wanted to do something different ... I guess I am a hybrid, liking both the same, wanting even to focus more on the process than the product.

By contrast, in her eyes, some other creative writing students seemed to find her approach 'too scary' because 'they were too worried about the end product, what the examiner would think if they tried something different'. She also yearned to have the time to work in a more cross-disciplinary way on collaborative projects with other students in the honours year, although this was found to be a problem, time-wise:

My impulse is to be inclusive not exclusive in creative work. The course is communal and connecting, but the individual projects are solitary.

The tension she feels regarding her perceived loss of opportunity for cross-disciplinary practice was not shared by the third student in this study, who, unlike this creative writing student, had been travelling and working for several years between school and university. By then, she worked out that the faculty could offer her the cross-disciplinary focus she craved – fashion, visual arts and literature. Although she sees herself primarily as a creative practitioner, she claims that:

I chose to do a traditional thesis of 15,000 words. My topic was very big so I knew it needed that number of words and couldn't accommodate creative practice as well. [I wanted to bridge] the divide between creative practice and theory ... In our course, some creative practitioner students were too concerned with the practice and not enough about the theory.

For this student, the synchronicities were the key:

Creative practice did inform my work – the two are inseparable in a sense. But ... for me at this stage, it was best to have critical distance, and write about someone else's work rather than my own.

Her thesis embodied, appropriately, a critical analysis of the works of two female cross-disciplinary artists. In this, she assessed that 'the three majors (fashion, visual arts and literature) worked for me and fuelled my passion'.

The limited time and scope of the honours year poses distinct challenges for both learning and teaching practices. In this faculty, the students usually choose to do honours by the end of the standard three-year bachelors degree. The particular style of articulation from the undergraduate degree to the highly focused honours program therefore creates its own imperatives, and the students' interactions with their supervisors and lecturers tend to be within a very high pressure environment of intellectual and creative practice expectations in order to complete the end-of-year demands for assessment. This is overlaid with the necessity to meet the deadline for postgraduate scholarship applications. As one creative writing honours student (now a postgraduate) expressed at the end of the year:

Compared with the undergraduate course, the honours year demanded an intellectual leap. Also in 'undergrad' the units were divided – you did the literature studies units and the creative writing units, but they didn't really talk to each other as units, and they were always seen by students as separate. In honours, you were encouraged, even required to blend the two.

Confronting problems with the 'tight timeline' and in 'jumping off that cliff into creative work', she needed to find:

precious space and time to do the actual thinking. Feminist theory itself stalled my creative work on 'chick lit' until I found some academic articles which seemed to give me permission to write the creative work.

We believe that this productive tension surrounding the theory/practice nexus has been enhanced and capitalised on by nurturing a research culture in our honours year. Cross-discipline connectivity is facilitated through the honours students mingling with, and being mentored by, postgraduate students through their participation in social gatherings (staff-supported) and more formally (essentially as helpers and as audience) in research seminars throughout the year, and in an annual postgraduate research conference. Students report gaining fresh perspectives on their own work through such cross-fertilisation, for instance:

I was interested in seeing their presentations. When I heard what they were doing, how they were pushing boundaries, for example, composing music scores, making

documentaries, creating visual art installations, I saw significant connections with my own work [creative writing], both in the theory and the practice.

The interdisciplinary honours student claimed that, in closely relating to postgraduate research students through seminars and the conference, she realised that:

we all had things in common – the problem with the literature review, the framing of the research question, just getting started. This helped me work out that I was doing a mini-PhD in a way and I no longer felt intimidated by the doctorate which had been a great unknown before.

The creative writing student working on ‘chick lit’ found some synchronicity across disciplines within the honours group itself: ‘It was great meeting the student doing performance arts work on chicks and comedy – we fuelled each other’s work. There were definite linkages’.

The concentrated process of embedding a high level of scholarship, practice and research within the one-year program therefore involves, by its very nature, a rather complex ‘border traffic’ between theory and practice, resulting in an appropriately unruly bricolage of methodologies and practices. The development in the honours program in creative industries could be said to be underpinned by pedagogical practices that have to be, by their very nature, devised ‘outside the box’, a pedagogy that may ‘unfix, unsettle and subvert’ more traditional honours programs (McLaren, cited in Elenes 2003: 200). As the above discussion of student views demonstrates, it is important that the creative practice students are encouraged to identify the existing conventions of their own work, and then come to an understanding of how to move beyond these boundaries. In this situation the supervisor has to guide the student through the theory-practice nexus at the same time as moving across disciplines, which can be both disruptive and transformative.

### **Flexing the reflective practice muscle**

This changing research environment also offers opportunities and challenges for academics who teach into interdisciplinary coursework units at honours level. Their pedagogy has to be one of collaboration because they are often working in dialogue with supervisors who are discipline-based. A dynamic, three-way relationship between supervisor, coursework lecturer and student adds yet another dimension to the diversity of experience encountered in honours programs. Joan A Mullin has commented on the self-awareness required of such situations, stating ‘[t]hose of us leading faculty toward different pedagogical understandings always have to be aware of how we are forwarding our own agendas, and we have to be flexible and open enough to reconsider our constructions of others and our definitions of their disciplines and ways of teaching’ (2008: 497). In our faculty, the collaborative relationship between the lecturers involved in teaching the program units and their academic colleagues, the supervisors of the honours candidates, is important because lecturer and supervisor work closely together at various times and on different levels during the year. For example, one key element of assessment across units in both semesters involves the input of lecturers and supervisors into evaluating students’ oral

presentations. Other students, both within honours and from the postgraduate cohort, are also present and invited to give their feedback. Robust debates often ensue. In this situation, the unit coordinators invite the supervisor of each student to attend the presentations, and her/his written feedback as well as overall suggested mark is taken into consideration, although the supervisor's suggestions do not in any way determine the grade. Staff teaching the program observe that supervisors have subtle, differential responses to their students' performance, both in content and delivery. Coursework units that are interdisciplinary often reveal different aspects of the project to supervisors who are invited to watch presentations of this work at the mid-year point.

In her research, Mullin has drawn attention to the need for recognizing that work has to be done to develop effective pedagogies in the context of interdisciplinary work. She argues that even key terms such as “genre” and “frame” and “discuss” can be problematic across disciplines’ (2008: 496-97), but that such problems are eased if one follows a process of active listening. In her terms: ‘[t]hat does not mean engaging in a kind of half-listening, that is, waiting for the opportunity to jump in and shape another’s disciplines to one’s own strategies and expectations. It means listening to try to hear how facilitators might be changed by another’s discipline’ (499). Her solution is to construct workshops and interactions that are dynamic in order to help facilitators learn what faculty assumptions are and see the ‘fault lines’ in their own assumptions (499) so that conflicting messages are not sent to students. While this emphasis on interdisciplinary processes may challenge the traditional authority of the discipline, there are benefits in the continual re-examination of both the discipline and the supervisor’s role. For example, staff involved with honours students may have to acknowledge the limits of their specialty frameworks.

In this discussion, we have focused on the stresses and strains on pedagogies in an interdisciplinary and practice-led research environment in the honours year. We note, however, that many such tensions continue to surface throughout the supervision of a Master of Arts or doctoral practice-led program. Demonstrating a doctoral level of expertise in a multidisciplinary environment is a rigorous process, and one of the challenges for supervisors and candidates is identifying that the starting point, the creative practice, can demonstrate the degree of innovation required in the postgraduate domain. In this situation, as in the honours environment, we find that a productive approach is to take the lead (theoretically as well as in practice) from the creative work itself; in effect, to build a pedagogical supervisory model that relates to the processes and practices of creative practice as research. This bricolage of connectivity further privileges the creative component because, as Carter notes, this is where innovation is so often found.

The pressures on postgraduate environments in general will become more intense as university programs shift focus to cope with changing expectations in the tertiary sector. These expectations will increasingly have an impact on pathway programs, such as honours, in the form of course design and the delivery of synchronous creative pedagogies such as the bricolage methodology discussed above. Rather than seeing such challenges as burdensome, we conclude, like Carter, that these shifts are in effect acts of ‘finding’, presenting creative opportunities for supervisors to develop strategies that are led by, and that complement, the foundational creative practice.

Such shifts provide opportunities for all educators at this level to ‘bend and stretch’ in a form of adaptive pedagogical callisthenics, in order to meet the requirements of an increasingly interdisciplinary and mobile research framework.

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